

1 & 2 Peter

The People of God

Notes and Comments by John Sullivan

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

*Once you were not a people,
but now you are the people of God;
once you had not received mercy,
but now you have received mercy.*

1 Peter 2:9 – 10

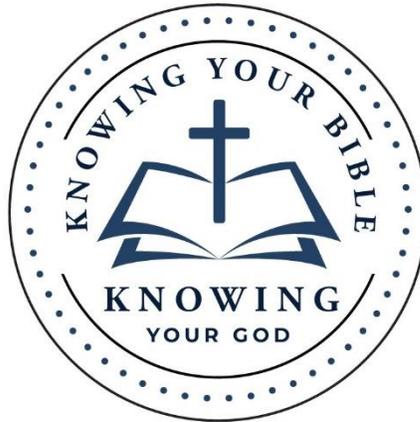
1 & 2 Peter

The People of God

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NOTE TO E-BOOK READERS:

The printed journal, unlike this e-book version, has pages for notes.

You might want to have your own journal, either physical or electronic for this study.

1 & 2 Peter

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His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

2 Peter 1:3 – 4

1 & 2 Peter

The People of God

Introduction

Peter was a man who went through a lot of spiritual growth. Here's a brief outline of what we know about him from the Gospels:

- His brother Andrew was a disciple of John the Baptist, who led Andrew to Jesus. Andrew, then, introduced his skeptical brother to Jesus, who changed his name from Simon to Peter (*John 1:35 – 42*). That's all that is said about him in that brief story.
- It is not clear whether Peter's encounter with Jesus in *Luke 5:1 – 11* came before or after that meeting with Jesus. In Luke's story, we see Jesus preaching to the crowds from Peter's boat and miraculously helping Peter and his associates catch a large number of fish. Peter's response at that time was "Go away from me Lord; I am a sinful man."
- Likewise, it is not clear whether Mark's account (*Mark 1:14 – 20*) of Peter, Andrew, James, and John being called to follow Jesus is before or after the other accounts. But what we see there is what we also see at the end of Luke's story referred to above: Peter left everything to follow Jesus.
- After following Jesus for some time, we see him rebuking Jesus for what Jesus said about being killed (*Mark 8:31 – 33*). And Jesus' unflattering remark was "Get behind me, Satan!"
- We also know that Peter denied Jesus three times when Jesus was arrested (*Luke 22:54 – 62*).
- But on the day of Pentecost, Peter stood up before the crowd in the same town where Jesus had been crucified and boldly told them that "God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." (*Acts 2:36*)

So, Peter had some ups and downs in his spiritual life, but, to say the least, he grew tremendously from the man we first see in the gospels to the man we see in *Acts 2*.

It's not surprising, then, that God would inspire him to write some very helpful ideas about our spiritual growth. In fact, he closes these two letters with: "Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." Peter wrote these two letters from "Babylon," which probably refers to Rome, with the help of Silas and Mark (*1 Peter 5:12 – 13*) about thirty years after Jesus ascended back to heaven. By that time, Peter had continued to grow in his faith and maturity and had much to offer to the people of his day and to us as well.

The subtitle of this journal is "*The People of God*," which comes from *1 Peter 2:10*. The title of each devotional reading is a description of a characteristic of the people of God that is found in that chapter of Peter's letter. There will certainly be other themes and applications that you will get from your own study of these Scriptures, but this is one idea to look for: *who you are because you are one of God's people*.

This journal is not designed to be a detailed commentary on each verse (see p. 18 for a short list of commentaries and other references), but it is set up in a way that will hopefully help you know your Bible and know your God better. If you do this with a group, the thought questions can be used as some of the discussion questions for your group. Hopefully, you will have much to share about from this study.

Also, this journal is set up with one guided devotional reading for each chapter. That could be used as a one-chapter-per-week pace. The devotional readings in this journal usually have four or five subheadings that could be done one a day. But, obviously, go at your own pace. The main thing, though, is to thoroughly and repeatedly read and meditate on the Scriptures. Hopefully, the comments in this journal will help, but they are, at best, the side dish. The main dish is the Word of God as found in this epistle.

May God bless you as you continue to know His Word better and know Him better!

John Sullivan
January 2026

NOTE: Here is a suggestion before you start the chapter-by-chapter analysis of *1 Peter*:

Read the whole epistle in one setting. You might enjoy having a Bible App read it to you out loud while you follow along in your Bible. It takes about 17 minutes.

Peter identifies himself and addresses his audience in his introduction (1:1 – 2). As you will see many other times in his letter, Peter puts a lot of powerful words in one sentence. This was around 65 to 68 AD, and Christians were scattered all over the known world, sometimes by choice but often because of persecution. That sometimes made them strangers in their city and scattered from their loved ones. So, Peter wanted them to know that they were God's chosen, elected "strangers" and that through Him they could have grace and peace in abundance. All of that is in the one compound sentence of his introduction!

NOTE: The guided devotionals in this journal usually have four or five subheadings. If it fits your pace, you could spend a day of meditation on each of them. Again, though, go at your own pace.

Grief and Joy (1:3 – 9)

Grief. Peter reminded them what they already knew about the grief that they were experiencing. You will see how many times his letters refer to the suffering that Christians were enduring at that time. He said that their grief was coming from "all kinds of trials" (1:6).

Joy. At the same time, their faith in Jesus had filled them with an "inexpressible and glorious joy" (1:8). They were receiving the goal of their faith which was the salvation of their souls (1:9).

Meditate about how it was possible for them to experience such a profound level of grief, yet they also were filled with inexpressible and glorious joy. How have you seen both of those in your life? _____

Knowing What Prophets and Angels Long to Know (1:10 – 12)

Peter gave three reasons to help them (and us) not overlook the incredible importance of the gospel story that we have been given the privilege to hear and believe:

- 1) He says that the prophets who spoke of these things long ago were serving us, not themselves. It's a story that we know well, but the prophets who predicted it wanted to see it with their own eyes.
- 2) It's good news for us, but the gospel came from the sufferings of Christ and the glories that followed his sufferings (1:11). We certainly don't want to take either of those lightly.
- 3) In fact, Peter said: "even angels long to look into those things" (1:12). And so should we!

Is it possible that we need to show greater appreciation for the Gospel Story? Meditate and pray about that.

"Be Holy, because I am Holy." (1:13 – 16)

Peter told them (and us) to "prepare your minds for action, be self-controlled [or sober-minded], and set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed" (1:13). We will see him give that challenge of prepared alertness again in his letter. (See the 7th Resource listed on page 18 for a good discussion about being sober-minded.) Here, he wanted to encourage them to be diligent to not conform to the world's standards. Instead, have the self-control to set your hope fully on the amazing grace you will receive in heaven.

To give a greater emphasis to that point, Peter quotes the statement from God about holiness that is found often in Scripture (see *Leviticus* (11:44; 11:45; 19:2; 20:7, for instance). The simplest understanding of "holy" is "different." God, in his character, is totally different from the false gods created by humans. And he always has said that he expects the same from his people. We are different (holy) because he is different (holy). That's who God is and that is who we are because (and only because) we are his people.

On the other hand, holy does not mean boastful or arrogant. How can you be different without being arrogant? _____

Redeemed from the Empty Way of Life (1:17 – 21)

Peter again reminds us that we are like "strangers" in this world, and we should live our lives in reverence of our Father (1:17), who is the only judge that matters.

"Redemption" is the act of buying someone from the bondage of slavery. Peter reminds us of two facts about our redemption:

- 1) We were redeemed from the "empty way of life" handed down to us by our world (1:18). That does not mean that everything we did or our people did was worthless. But we all know what he means by the emptiness of our old lives.
- 2) But, in addition to reminding us that we were redeemed from an empty life, Peter gave even greater emphasis to the cost of our redemption. It wasn't silver or gold but the "precious blood of Christ" (1:19).

There's a song that starts out "Redeemed, how I love to proclaim it; redeemed by the blood of the lamb."¹ Meditate about your redemption. What do you love to proclaim about it? _____

The Born-Again Kind of Love (1:22 – 25)

There is probably nothing more holy (different) about God than his love. It is so different from anything else that we experience or expect to experience. And there is probably nothing more holy (different) about God's people than their love. Peter says to "love one another deeply, from the heart. For you have been born again . . ." (1:22 – 23). That's the only explanation for why we are able to love. We have been born again by the living and enduring Word of God. That's who we are because we are God's people.

Meditate about how your love for others has changed because of God. Give the credit to Him, not to yourself, but still be grateful for that change.

Thought Questions

1. What does it mean to you personally and practically to be prepared for action (1:13)?
2. Recall that holy means different. What is different in your life from the "empty way of life" you used to have?
3. What is different about your love since you have been born again?

Notes

¹ "Redeemed How I Love to Proclaim It" was written by the blind Fanny Crosby in 1882, who wrote many hymns including *Blessed Assurance*. You can hear one version of this song on YouTube: "Redeemed, how I love to proclaim it/Jehovah Shalom Acapella." You might also be inspired to read about her life.

This chapter starts off with the word "therefore." In other words, here are some practical and inspirational results, some logical conclusions, of God's holy people having been redeemed and born again.

What to Eliminate and What to Crave (2:1 – 3)

What to Eliminate: malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, slander. None of those are consistent with who God is and who we are because of him. You were redeemed and born again, so rid yourselves of these things.

What to Crave: pure spiritual milk. Makes sense that if we are born again, we are like babies in the way we need nourishment. And it's not food that is healthy but tastes bad. He says "now that you have tasted that the Lord is good." He doesn't say exactly what he meant by the figure of speech "pure spiritual milk," but we can get the idea of craving the things that will help us grow spiritually. That's not a check-list of religious activities to mindlessly do, but it is what our spirit "craves" the same way a baby craves milk.

Meditate about the application of "pure spiritual milk" to your life. Do you crave it? _____

The Cornerstone of God's Living House (2:4 – 8)

We are God's living house. (Compare *Ephesians 2:19 – 22*.) Peter quotes Isaiah and the Psalms to refer to Jesus as the cornerstone (the perfectly formed foundational block from which all of the other blocks line up). While some people rejected him to their own detriment, he ended up being the most important part of the building.

Is Jesus the cornerstone of your life's building? _____

Chosen to Declare Praise (2:9 – 10)

Note that this passage starts with the word "but." The previous verse talked about how some people stumble over Jesus being the cornerstone. This verse says, that on the other hand, you are chosen.

This is many people's favorite part of Peter's letter. I know it is one of my favorites. It contains the phrase that is the subtitle of this journal. See also *Exodus 19:5 – 6* for God's original expression of these ideas, then meditate on each of them, writing your thoughts about them here:

- You are a chosen people. _____
- You are a royal priesthood. _____
- You are a holy nation. _____
- You are a people belonging to God. _____

Purpose. Hopefully, these are inspirational thoughts. But they are not truths that are just written to only make us feel better about ourselves. There is a reason, a purpose, for our being chosen. The reason mentioned here is "that you may declare the praises of him who called us out of darkness into his wonderful light" (2:9). Chosen to declare praise. That's us. But declare praises to whom? To God or to other people about God? Probably both, don't you think? It's doubtful that God would only have made us to hear us praise him. He already has a heaven full of angels doing that. While we are dedicated to give praises to God, there are also many other people who have not yet heard the praises of God, and we are chosen to declare those praises to them as well. How are you doing with that purpose for being chosen? _____

If you're familiar with the book of *Hosea*, you know that verse 10 fits in with that story very well. We are like the children in Hosea's life who had not experienced God's love and mercy and had, in fact, felt rejected by him. But God changed their names to loved and accepted. At one time we were not God's people and had not received mercy, but Jesus changed all of that.

This is who you are because of who God is. How does that make you feel and how does it make you want to help others who need to hear it also? _____

Conscious of God (2:11 – 20)

Once again Peter gets us to recognize that we are aliens and strangers in this world (2:11). He says we are free people, but we should not use our freedom as a cover-up for evil (2:16), which is also what Paul said in *Galatians 5:13*. On the other hand, living a life that is "conscious of God" (2:19) makes us show love and respect that is so uncommon in this world. Who willingly shows the kind of submission and respect described in these verses except people who are consciously, purposefully, and intentionally using Jesus as the role model of the way they treat people and the way they react to situations in their daily lives?

Meditate on the thought of being conscious of God – not just having him in the back of your mind, but being fully alert to the presence of God. How does that change the way you view and react to your life's situations?

Following Christ's Example (2:21 – 25)

"To this you were called . . ." (2:21). We all know that our whole goal as a disciple is to do what Jesus would do. But what specifically is this verse asking us to imitate about Jesus? _____

That might be something that we would rather not imitate about Jesus. Let me love and serve people, but don't ask me to suffer like he did. Or to react to suffering the way he did – he didn't retaliate or threaten them (2:23). Instead, he trusted himself to God. Imagine what the world would be like if everyone followed this example of Jesus. We can't change the whole world, but we can acknowledge that this is who Jesus is and this is what he has called us to do.

Peter repeated the Gospel idea that it was by the wounds that Jesus experienced in his suffering that we are healed (2:24). The result is that we who had ran away from the Good Shepherd were found and brought back to Him (2:25). That's the good news. We believe it and rejoice in it. Never forget it. But don't forget the rest of this passage where we are also reminded to follow in his steps.

Spend some time in prayer thanking Jesus for the way his suffering has brought healing in your life. We don't ever want to get in the habit of forgetting that. How can you also apply these verses to your life? _____

Thought Questions

1. What do you need to do to help you crave pure spiritual milk more?
2. What inspires you the most, personally and practically, about the ideas found in 2:9 – 10?
3. What part of Christ's example about suffering do you need more help with?

Notes

We are God's people. That not only inspires us; it also gives us some practical, though sometimes challenging, ways to live our lives. One of the biggest areas of impact is in our relationships. This chapter gives us some practical, challenging, and encouraging ideals about those relationships.

Gentle and Quiet Spirit (3:1 – 6)

Peter's focus here is on married women disciples of Christ, but some of the general principles taught here apply to single women, and, in fact, to men as well. For instance, the "purity and reverence" of your lives that speak much louder than your words could certainly apply to all of us. That is the same concept he was teaching in chapter 2 verse 12.

We are also told that the "gentle and quiet spirit" (3:4) is more beautiful than outward beauty. We know from examples of godly women and from other teachings in the Bible, that he was not extolling the idea of women being awkwardly silent and ignored for their importance. (Recall *Proverbs 31*, for instance.) But, rather, it gives the impression of a woman with a great deal of self-control and inner peace. Again, a quality that does not just fit married women.

While this passage has some things to apply to all of us, it is, of course, written to married women. What do you see here that, if applied properly, would benefit marriages? _____

Considerate and Respectful (3:7)

As stated about the passage above, this one is focused on married men, but it has applications to others as well. The two key words are **considerate** and **respect**. We all need to pay attention to those words in our relationships, right?

There is much debate about what he meant about "weaker." The simplest answer is that he was just referring to the general rule about physical strength. While that might be debatable, the main point that he is making about husbands and wives (and, I think, male and female in general) is that they are both "heirs of the gracious gift of life." When it comes to being heirs of God, there is no hint of inferiority or superiority there.

Finally, this short passage mentions that we want to make sure that "nothing hinders your prayers." How do you think a husband's lack of consideration and respect could actually hinder his prayers? And how about any of your relationships; do you think your lack of consideration and respect could hinder your prayers?

Love and Compassion (3:8 – 12)

This, Peter says, applies to "all of you." In other words, female or male, single or married – these are principles that are needed in every relationship. These are the kinds of qualities that are emphasized so often in Scripture. (For example, see *Colossians 3:12* for a similar list.) Imagine what every relationship would be like if those qualities were put into practice. For instance, how much would arguments and disputes be changed if relationships would just practice the principle about avoiding retaliation (3:9, which also relates to 2:23)?

Love and compassion. That's who God is, and that's who we are because of him. Let's not worry right now about changing everyone in the world. What do you need to do personally to apply these relationship principles today? _____

Prepared and Respectful (3:13 – 17)

Another relationship principle that often leads to conflicts if avoided is the respectful way to talk to people.

Prepared. Peter tells his Christian readers to be prepared for people's questions (3:15). Note, however, that he does not say that you have to be able to answer every difficult question that could come up. Rather, he specifically says to be ready to tell people the reason for the hope that you have.

If someone asked you right now why you are so hopeful, what would you say? _____

If you're not prepared for that yet, you might want to spend some time thinking about that.

Respectful. He also says to give your answer with "*gentleness and respect*" (3:15). That's the part that is too often overlooked, even by Christians. (Or, maybe, especially by Christians?) If it is omitted, it almost always leads to a bad relationship. Note that all of this starts with setting apart Christ as Lord in your heart (3:15). If we do that, then his example and his Spirit will guide us in those times.

Which is more difficult for you right now: being prepared or being respectful? _____

The Pledge of a Good Conscience (3:18 – 22)

The subject changes in these last verses from relationships to an application of the flood event in Noah's day. Peter says that the flood waters symbolize what the water of baptism does for us. There is maybe one difference: in our baptism, our sins are washed away; in the flood waters, the sinners were washed away. The world was saved in the only way possible at that time – wash the sinners away and start all over. We are saved in a much more gracious way – wash the sin away and start all over. (By the way, which method of washing would you prefer?)

He makes it clear that it is really not the water in our baptism that actually cleanses us, but it is the pledge of our good conscience and the resurrection of Jesus Christ that saves us. Nevertheless, it is an interesting point and reminds us, once again, how grateful we are to be saved.

Thought Questions

1. Do you see yourself as a person of love and respect?
2. Is there anything in your relationships that might be hindering your prayers?
3. Are you prepared to give a reason for your hope?

Notes

We have already heard Peter's encouraging words of support about the suffering that the Christians of his day were experiencing. They knew that Peter himself experienced that suffering as well, so his inspired insights must have given them (as it does us) a lot of encouragement.

Living for God (4:1 – 6)

He first of all encourages us to have the same attitude that Jesus had about suffering. We know that Jesus' suffering was painful to him, and at times overwhelming (*Mark 14:34*). So, his attitude was not flippant joy; nor did he try to cover up the pain with the kinds of distractions mentioned in verse 3. What would you say was his attitude about suffering that you can imitate today? _____

Peter then says that our suffering can give us a different attitude about sin. We can come to the healthy realization that we are no longer living our lives for evil human desires, "*but rather for the will of God*" (4:2). Hopefully, it doesn't require suffering to make us realize that. Even if people seem surprised that we don't indulge in their activities (4:4), we can say, "*This is who I am because of God's grace; I am someone who lives for the will of God.*" This should definitely not be said with boasting or arrogance. Maybe it doesn't even have to be said out loud at all, but can you humbly but confidently say that to yourself? _____

Do you agree with Peter that you have spent enough time in the past devoted to sin (4:3), or do you think that you still owe yourself a little more sin time? _____

Clear-Minded and Self-Controlled (4:7 – 9)

This is one of Peter's paragraphs that is packed with a lot of ideas that are each worthy of spending some time meditating on and praying about how to apply them to our lives.

- "*Clear-minded and self-controlled [or sober-minded]*" (4:7). This is the second time we have seen Peter talk about this kind of mind-set (and we will see it again later). The first time (1:13) was to encourage them (and us) to be diligent to not conform to the world's standards. This time it is to help us to be able to pray. He says that the end is near, and we need to be clear-minded and self-controlled so that we can pray. When we lose our heads and have a lack of discipline, we tend to panic instead of pray.
- "*Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers a multitude of sins*" (4:8). As important as disciplines such as self-control are, there is still nothing that is more characteristic of God and his people than love. Living a life of love is living for the will of God. (Recall what Peter already said about that in 1:22.)
- "*Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling*" (4:9). He knows us too well! Even when we are willing to serve, we sometimes do it with grumbling. Fortunately, as stated in the previous verse, love covers over a multitude of sins, even our grumbling.

Clear your mind and exercise some self-control so you can pray today about being someone who lives for God's will by loving others deeply. As you do that, what stands out to you from these packed verses to apply to your life today? _____

Using Your Gifts to Glorify God (4:10 – 11)

God has given each of us gifts, insights, abilities, and talents. The Bible has a lot to say about the importance of the variety of those gifts (*1 Corinthians 12:12 – 31* and *Romans 12:3 – 8*, for instance). Peter's insight is that when we use our gifts to serve others we are "*faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms*" (4:10). Talk about a packed sentence. Have you ever thought that when you serve others with your ability, you are giving out one form of God's grace? _____

Peter's two specific gift examples involve speaking and serving. Speak with the words that God provides and serve with the strength that God provides. And do it all for the praise and glory of God. All of that is packed into one short but huge verse (4:11). Peter knew how to say a lot with a few words.

Write some of your thoughts as you meditate about how all of that changes the focus of the way you use your gifts to serve others. _____

Rejoicing in Suffering (4:12 – 19)

Now, back to suffering. Why do you think Peter tells us to "*not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you*" (4:12)? _____

He then says to rejoice when we are suffering for Christ, which is exactly what he heard Jesus say (*Matthew 5:11 – 12*.) He makes it clear that he is not talking about suffering that results from our own sins, but suffering that is specifically caused by the persecution from others because of our faith in Jesus. We may not actually have much of that kind of suffering today; but they definitely did. And God will certainly help us with any kind of suffering we have.

He concludes by saying: "*So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good*" (4:19). That, of course, is exactly what Jesus did. He is that way, and he has made us to be that way. He is our teacher, and he is our role model in everything.

Thought Questions

1. What does it mean for you personally and practically to live for the will of God?
2. How does it help your prayer life to focus as stated in verse 7?
3. How can you personally use your gifts to glorify God?
4. What can you do to help you rejoice when suffering for Christ?

Notes

We are God's people – or as Scripture often puts it: we are God's sheep, his flock.

The shepherds and the Chief Shepherd (5:1 – 4)

Peter was an elder, a shepherd. His instructions to his fellow elders included some important reminders:

- It is God's flock that is under your care (5:2).
- Serve because you are willing, not because you must, and certainly not because of greed (5:2).
- Don't lord it over people, but serve them and set an example for them (5:3).
- Always remember that Jesus is the Chief Shepherd (5:4).

All of these are good reminders for all of us as well. We are God's flock. He is our amazing Shepherd, and he has provided us with shepherds who care for us as well. How do you feel about all of that? _____

Humility and Pride (5:5 – 6)

These verses start off as an admonition to young men, but then turns into an "all of you" instruction, involving humility and pride. Peter refers to *Proverbs 3:34*.

God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.

(See also *James 4:6* and *Luke 18:14*.) The results of pride are described in words that communicate a horrible thought to us: *God opposes the proud*. As tempting as pride might be, those words are enough to cause us to back away as far as we can from it. On the other hand, this verse also describes the results of humility in words that communicate a great blessing: *He shows favor to the humble*. We don't ever have to worry about lifting ourselves up. As we humble ourselves under God's mighty hand, he will lift us up in due time (5:6).

How does that help you? _____

Who are the shepherds that the Good Shepherd has placed in your life? Pray for them, and pray about the humility that you will show today.

Casting Your Anxieties on God (5:7)

Here's a short verse that is definitely worth at least a full day's meditation:

Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

The Bible never says that you don't have any stress or anxieties or that you shouldn't have any. That would make us doubt the wisdom and realism of God's word. Of course we have them; everyday brings some stress and anxieties. How can you cast anxiety onto God if you don't have any? We have anxieties. What God teaches us is what to do with them.

Think of the word "cast." Throw them. Grab them up with both hands and throw them to God. And also think of God. He is not like what we humans might be if you tried that – "don't throw your junk on me!" **He cares for you.** That is who he is as your Good Shepherd. He tells you to throw them on him. What does God do with them? I don't know. And I don't have to worry about it, because when I have thrown them on him, they're not mine anymore. He can handle it and is glad to do it.

NOTE: anxiety is not a thing; it is an attitude. It is not the difficult challenge that you are facing tomorrow; it is the unhealthy and unproductive worry about that situation that is draining your energy and wasting your time. When you cast your anxiety onto God about a responsibility that you have, you still have that responsibility. (Sorry about that!) But he has freed you from the fears and worries about it and has freed you to approach it with his spiritual energy and wisdom. Most of the time it is not the things that we have to do that exhausts us to the point of almost complete collapse; it is the worry, the fear of failure, the desire to be in control, the anxiety about what others will think that drains us so much. That is what the caring Shepherd wants us to cast on him. The things we have to do might (and should) tire us out, but anxiety will wear us out, and he does not want you to have to live that way.

(**NOTE:** Sometimes you may also need to cast some of your responsibilities on to him and let him help you get some help with them. But that's another story. Here, he's talking about anxiety.)

Playing catch with God. Think of your anxieties for a minute. Don't ignore them; pile them up in a big pile. Now grab them and throw them to God. Again, we are not talking about shirking your responsibilities, but casting your anxieties about them onto God. Throw them to him. Let him throw his caring peace back to you. Catch it! How does it feel to do that? _____

Alert and Sober-minded (5:8 – 9)

This is the third time that we have seen Peter give the instruction about being self-controlled (or literally sober-minded) (1:13, 4:7, and 5:8). This time it is so that we will be alert about our enemy, the devil, who is actually prowling "*around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour*" (5:8). How's that for a graphic visual? Peter says that we can resist him and also that we can know that our brothers and sisters all over the world are in the same battle.

What does it mean for you specifically to be alert and to resist the devil? _____

The God of All Grace (5:10 – 14)

We have focused on what it is like to be the *people of God*. But while the word "*people*" is important in that phrase, the word "*God*" is even more important. It is who he is that explains anything good about who we are. And this is a great explanation of who God is: *He is the God of all grace* (5:10). Not just some grace, or enough grace to get by – but all grace. And God himself will strengthen you. How about that? So Peter, with the help of Silas, wrote this letter to encourage us to stand fast in "*the true grace of God*" (5:12).

That's who God is – he is the God of all grace. And that is who you are – you are the people of the God of all grace. That gives us a lot of peace in a world that is not very peaceful. So, Peter closes this letter with this appropriate blessing (5:14):

Peace to all of you who are in Christ.

Thought Questions

1. What are some of the blessings of having God as your Shepherd?
2. How are you doing at casting your anxieties on Him?
3. After studying *1 Peter*, how would you summarize what it is like to be the people of the God of all grace?

Notes

NOTE: Before you start the chapter-by-chapter analysis of 2 Peter, you might benefit from reading the whole epistle in one setting, or use a Bible App to listen to it. It takes about 10 minutes.

In the introduction to his second letter (1:1 – 2), Peter emphasizes that it is through the righteousness of our God and of our Savior Jesus Christ that we have received our faith. It is not because of our righteousness, but because of theirs. He also refers to our faith as "precious" (1:1). Do we see our faith as precious?

Human Beings Participating in the Divine Nature? (1:3 – 4)

Can this statement be true? Is it a misprint of some kind? We're humans, and we are made aware of that on a daily basis. Yet we are told that God's promises provide us with the reality of participating in the "divine nature" (1:4). That's right: *divine nature!* Don't let this amazing thought escape you today. Read it a few times until it is really sinking in. It explains what is said in verse 3 that God has given us everything we need for "a godly life."

This can easily be a life-changing perspective. Meditate on the inspiration of that thought and think about how it impacts your life today and forever.

Qualities of the Divine Nature (1:5 – 9)

Here are eight qualities of that divine nature. These virtues are all available to us as a gift from God's Spirit. What we are called here to do is to grow in them, to "add" them to our lives. "They will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1:8). Knowing the Lord better is one of the goals of these personal studies. But the goal is not just intellectual knowledge – knowing things about the Lord. That kind of knowledge can actually be "ineffective and unproductive." But truly knowing the Lord is not just knowing about him; it is knowing him. Truly and personally knowing God has the full blessings mentioned in verses 2 and 3, but intellectual knowledge without these qualities can be ineffective and unproductive. Pray that you are experiencing the true level of knowledge.

Pick one of these virtues. What thoughts come to your mind about how you can grow in it? _____

Make Your Calling and Election Sure (1:10 – 15)

Our "calling" comes from God. Our "election" is God choosing us and selecting us as His people. That all comes from the God of all grace. But we are encouraged here, as we are in other Scriptures, to make it our devoted focus as well (1:10). In other words, put some attention and effort into it, but put some enthusiasm into it also.

It's great that Peter mentions three times in these verses that he wants us to remember these things. Peter knew that his time was short (1:14), and he says that he was putting a lot of effort into helping us remember. It's the least we can do to put our effort into remembering our calling and election.

What does it mean to you personally and practically to "make every effort to confirm your calling and election" or as some translations have it "make it sure"? _____

So many Scriptures are inspirational, encouraging, and extremely practical. The first three sections of this chapter are like that. Other Scriptures provide important information and instruction about the foundations of our faith. That's what the last two paragraphs of this chapter do. In particular, these verses give us some valuable insight into the reliability of Scripture. After all, the verses in the first part of this chapter would not be all that inspirational and practical if they were not also reliable. How can you know that the Bible is reliable? It's not disrespectful to ask that question. These next two sections give us some simple but helpful thoughts in answering that question. If you would like to dig more deeply into that question, consider resources like the 5th one listed on page 18.

Eyewitnesses of His Majesty and Glory (1:16 – 18)

Peter says that he didn't make this stuff up. It wasn't "*cleverly invented stories*." He was an eyewitness of Jesus' majesty and glory. The scene he describes is the transfiguration of Jesus from *Matthew 17:1 – 9*. (You might want to re-read that short story to get the inspiration that Peter is getting across here.)

Peter's words and actions at the actual time of that event were not exactly stellar, but you can see the impact it had on him. Now, he just wanted his readers (which includes us) to realize the importance of God's own words about Jesus that day: "*This is my Son, whom I love, with him I am well pleased*" (1:17).

You can see the importance of what this means about the reliability of Peter's writings. He did not make this up.

The Word of the Prophets Made More Certain (1:19 – 21)

This is an important discussion about the way God speaks through his prophets. It has an impact on the accuracy, authority, and relevance of God's Scriptures. The words in Scripture did not come about by "*the prophet's own interpretation*" (1:20). In other words, they didn't just make it up. Rather, they "*spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit*" (1: 21).

How do Peter's words about his writing (1:16 – 18) and his explanation about the prophets (1:19 – 21) impact your faith about the Bible? _____

Thought Questions

1. Do you believe you have everything you need for a godly life?
2. What does it mean to you personally and practically to participate in the divine nature?
3. What inspires you the most about the qualities listed in verses 5 – 7?
4. How do you think you can confirm your calling and election (1:10)?

Notes

This chapter is certainly different from the other parts of Peter's letters. It starts off with the word "but." Peter had been talking in the previous verses about the prophets who spoke from God. *But*, he says, that there were also false prophets in those days just as there were false teachers in their day. Unfortunately, we have to say that the same thing is true today. Peter's goals seem to be to:

- 1) warn the Christians about these false teachers by giving them some identifying characteristics of false prophets, and then
- 2) show them how God deals with the false prophets and how he will rescue the Christians from those trials.

Identifying False Prophets by Their False Teachings and Ungodly Actions

Some of the harshest words said in Scripture about false prophets are found in this chapter:

- They deny the sovereign Lord (2:1).
- They are motivated by greed and exploit people with stories that they have made up (2:3), which is in contrast to what Peter said about not making up his writings to them (1:16).
- They slander celestial beings and blaspheme in "matters they do not understand" (2:10 – 12).
- They are experts in greed and seduce unstable people (2:14).
- Their empty, boastful words, appeal to the lustful desires of the sinful nature. They entice people who have just escaped the world (2:18).
- They promise freedom to others while they themselves are slaves of depravity (2:19).

This is not talking about people who love the Lord and respect the authority of his Word but have a difference of opinion from you about the interpretation of Scripture or have a misunderstanding about some doctrines. We are told from examples like the way Priscilla and Aquila taught the misinformed Apollos "the way of God more adequately" how to respectfully, yet firmly, handle those situations (Acts 18:24 – 28). This is not talking about people who have genuine questions about your faith and wonder why you could have the hope that you have. Peter told us in his first letter how to deal with that (1 Peter 3:13 – 17). These are evil hearts, people who deny that Jesus is Lord, and are motivated by their own greed to exploit unsuspecting people.

How does it really feel to hear this description of the false teachers? _____

How God will Deal with Them

Interestingly enough, Peter doesn't tell them how to handle these false prophets, but he does say how God will deal with them.

- God will not spare them. If he didn't spare the angels who rebelled (2:4) or the evil world at the time of the flood (2:5) or the sinful cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (2:6), then he won't spare these false prophets.
- "They will be paid back with harm for the harm they have done" (2:13).
- "It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them" (2:21). That implies that some of the false teachers had been in the fellowship before and have left it. That is similar to Paul's warning to the elders in Acts 20:29 – 31 about false teachers that would come "even from your own number." The punishment will be severe for them.

Other Scriptures give us more detail by telling us to warn divisive people, rebuke and correct false teaching, and to ask those who won't repent to leave. But one thing we get from Peter's writing is that God will do the punishing. We can count on that, and we can leave that up to him. Our role is to be warned and stay devoted to the truth. God's role is punishment. (See Romans 12:19 and Hebrews 10:30 which quote God's words in Deuteronomy 32:35 reminding us that revenge is the sole property of God, not us.)

The other insight from Peter is that God knows how to rescue us from trials like these (2:9). That's who God is, and that's who we are because of him. He is the God who rescues his people, and we are the people of God who have been rescued by him. We use the word "saved" a lot to describe the way God has redeemed us from our old lives. Sometimes salvation can be thought of in the literal sense of "rescued." That is the idea here; God saves us from the consequences of these ungodly teachers – he rescues us from them.

God will handle punishment and he will rescue us. How does that feel? _____

Thought Questions

1. Why do you think we need chapters like these?
2. What is our role and what is not our role in dealing with false prophets?
3. Do you believe that God will rescue you from these kinds of trials?

Notes

Holy and Godly People Looking Forward to His Return

Date _____

Peter says that the goal of the reminders in his two letters is to stimulate them (and us) "to wholesome thinking" (3:1 – 2). As he closes out his second letter, he stimulates us with some wholesome discussion of the second coming of Jesus. For two centuries now there have been many discussions about Jesus' return, some of it hasn't been all that wholesome. Unwarranted speculations, ungodly scare tactics, and unbiblical teachings have come up in every generation. What God inspired Peter to write, on the other hand, is sensible, useful, and easy to understand.

God's Patience (3:3 – 9)

Peter described some scoffers who use the fact that Jesus has not returned yet to ridicule the idea that he will return. If that logic made sense to the scoffers in the first century just 30 years or so after Jesus' ascension, imagine how much it could be used today – if you wanted to be a scoffer. I don't know about you, but that's never been one of my ambitions. Peter said that they "*deliberately forget*" (3:5) some things about God and his history. He then gives us the sensible statement, referencing *Psalm 90:4*, that helps us avoid wrong conclusions about a lot of things that we might be tempted to speculate about: "*With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years is like a day*" (3:8). So, trying to describe God's activities with our understanding of calendar might not be the most wholesome type of thinking.

Peter also says in verse 9 that the point of God's patience is to give us time to repent (a thought that will also be discussed in verse 15). So, instead of scoffing about how long God is waiting for his Son to return, we might want to spend some time thanking God about his patience. What are your thoughts about that?

What Kind of People Ought You to Be? (3:10 – 13)

Peter uses the phrase that is often found in Scripture: "*the day of the Lord*" (3:10). That phrase was used in Old Testament Scriptures to describe times when God would step into history in a dramatic way, usually to punish sin and restore sanity. In the New Testament it is used to describe the second coming of Jesus and the destruction of this world. Here are some of Peter's sensible and practical thinking about that day:

- **It will come like a thief (3:10).** In other words, you are prepared and expecting it, but you don't know exactly when to expect it. Peter heard Jesus use those words in *Matthew 24:42 – 44*, Paul used them in *1 Thessalonians 5:2*, and John heard Jesus say them in *Revelation 16:15*.
- **The visible universe will be destroyed (3:10 and 3:12).** Among other things, that means that you will definitely know it is happening. It won't be a hidden secret.
- **That will lead to the coming of the new heaven and the new earth, the home of righteousness (3:13).** That sounds like the amazing promise of *Revelation 21*. That is the day we are all looking forward to. That fits in with what Peter said in his first letter: "*set your hope on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed*" (*1 Peter 1:13*) and in his second letter about receiving "*a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*" (*2 Peter 1:11*).

So, you can see that Peter's conclusion about all of that (3:11 – 12) is wholesome thinking; it makes sense: "*Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming.*"

The emphasis on the second coming of Jesus and the end times has varied a lot through the years. In the previous century, you heard about it a lot. Many books and conferences were devoted to it. There has not been as much discussion about it the last few years. Neither an unhealthy obsession with the topic nor a lack of interest in it would be "*wholesome thinking*." Balanced thinking would probably be better; don't be alarmed or caught up in unfounded theories, but also don't ignore the importance of that day. Do the only thing you can do: be prepared. Live your life as one of God's people who is ready for that day.

What are your thoughts about that? _____

Looking Forward to His Return (3:14 – 16)

Peter continues his thoughts about the second coming by telling them that they were "*looking forward to this*" (3:14). Not dreading it or hoping that it will be delayed, but looking forward to it. Recall that he had even said to "*speed its coming*" (3:12). He again puts the emphasis on the kind of people we ought to be. This time he says to "*make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him*" (3:14). (Another great verse to meditate on the key words found there: *spotless, blameless and at peace with him*.)

As mentioned before, Peter also makes another observation about God's patience: "*our Lord's patience means salvation*" (3:15). It doesn't mean that we have an excuse to not repent. It just means that God is giving us the time to repent.

As a side note, Peter gives some more important information about Scripture, especially New Testament Scriptures. We saw his contribution to that thought earlier (1:16 – 21) as he described his own writings and the writings of the prophets. Here he refers to Paul's writings as Scripture (3:15 – 16). That gives us some insight into the reliability of the collection of Scriptures we call the Bible.

What stands out to you from these verses? _____

Grow in Grace and Knowledge (3:17 – 18)

Peter's next to the last statement in this letter is an encouragement for them to be on their guard so that they would not be carried away by the errors that he pointed out in chapter two and then fall from their secure position. Being alert, being prepared, being self-controlled – those are consistent challenges that we have seen in both of his letters.

Peter's concluding statement is an encouragement about growth in two vital areas (3:18):

*But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.*

Lord, as the people of God please help us grow in grace and our knowledge of You!

Thought Questions

1. Do you think there has been a lack of interest and emphasis on the second coming of Jesus?
2. Are you looking forward to that day?
3. After studying 2 Peter, are you growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ?

Notes

1 & 2 Peter

The People of God

Conclusion

Thank you for devoting this time to study God's word and apply it to your life. Hopefully, Peter's goal has been realized in your study, which was to stimulate you to wholesome thinking (2 Peter 3:1).

Among other things, my thinking has been stimulated about the God of all grace and what it means to be the people of God. By his grace, I am grateful for what he has given us and what he calls us to be. Here are some characteristics of the people of God that we have seen in the eight chapters of these two letters:

- We are a holy people for a holy God (1 Peter 1).
- We are a chosen people (1 Peter 2).
- We are a people of love and respect (1 Peter 3).
- We are a people living for God's will (1 Peter 4).
- We are God's sheep (1 Peter 5).
- We are participants in the divine nature (2 Peter 1).
- We are people who are being rescued from trials (2 Peter 2).
- We are a holy and godly people who are looking forward to Jesus' return (2 Peter 3).

All of those are certainly stimulating, wholesome concepts that are worthy of our prayers and devotion.

One of the wholesome aspects of these characteristics of God's people is the fact that they are all based on the character of God. As stated on page 10 of this journal, it is who he is that explains anything good about who we are. It always leads to some unwholesome thinking to put that credit on us.

A healthy balance is needed:

- on the one hand, we should make every effort to remember who we are and not let ourselves carelessly slip into ungodly thinking and behavior,
- but on the other hand, we should definitely remember that who we are is totally the result of who God is.

We are God's people.

Personally and practically emphasize the word "we" in that sentence, but make sure that we emphasize the word "God" way more.

This might be a good time for you to write a summary of the convictions you gained from this study about who God is and what it means for you on a personal and practical level to be one of the people of God. What inspires you the most about who you are because of who God is? Write about it, meditate on it, pray about how you can remember to live every day with that identity.

Meanwhile, may we continue to know God better by knowing his Word better.

Using the words of the closing benediction from Peter's first letter:

Peace to all of you who are in Christ.

John Sullivan

Resources

Alexander, David and Pat *Erdmans' Handbook of the Bible*. Lion Publishing, 1973.

Barclay, William *The Letters of James and Peter*, The Westminster Press, 1960.

Halley, Henry *Halley's Bible Handbook*, Zondervan, 2000.

Hamilton, Mark (editor) *The Transforming Word*, Abilene Christian University Press, 2009.

Lightfoot, Neil R. *How we Got the Bible*, Bake Book House, 1963.

Websites and Apps

- www.biblegateway.com A free online, searchable tool with the Bible in multitudes of translations and languages, along with many other Bible-study aids.
- www.gotquestions.org A searchable tool designed to try to give reasonable answers to Bible questions. Just type in the question and see what you think about their answer. For example, ask "*What does it mean to be sober-minded?*" to get a good discussion about a topic mentioned often in Peter's letters.
- YouVersion Bible App A free download of the Bible in many versions to make the Word of God available on your phone or other devices. The audio reading of the Bible is especially helpful.

Notes

Notes